

A2 Unit 3: Reading for Meaning

Annotated student response to Assessment 2

<p>In the two poems, 'Song' by Aphra Behn and 'It's Only Love' by Sheenagh Pugh, both poets attempt to describe the feeling and effects of love. Because the experience of love, especially being 'in love', is very complex, it can be difficult to put into words in a straightforward way. As a result, both poets use a lot of imagery and write in quite indirect ways. Both poets refer to love as if it is a disease but a disease 'that has more Joys than Health' or that can make 'Sufferers claim to see heaven/ on earth'.</p> <p>This confusion of feeling is similar to when Romeo tries to describe love in <u>Romeo and Juliet</u> when he refers to 'sick health' or 'cold fire'. It is oxymoron, where the words are opposites, which helps to put across how mixed the emotions are. This kind of language is quite common in love poetry of all times down to song lyrics of today.</p> <p>Aphra Behn's poem gives a positive interpretation of love. Her poem is in three slightly unequal stanzas, mainly in rhyming couplets. It has a regular rhythm which makes it suitable for a song. She presents the poem as if she is addressing Love as a person, or a character, personifying it.</p> <p>The first stanza is made up mainly of a list of oxymorons to describe love:</p> <p>'Pleasing Delusion, Witchery divine'</p> <p>She also describes how love benefits people, even if we 'complain' about it. She suggests several positive ways that people are changed by love.</p> <p>'Love wakes the dull from sluggish Ease'</p> <p>The words 'dull' and 'sluggish' with some assonance emphasize the person is boring, lazy and slow, but livens up when love comes on the scene. As well, love 'Humbles the Vain' and makes 'Cowards bold'. She even claims it can 'reform' an alcoholic.</p>	<p>Sarah begins by making a basic link between the poems quite effectively.</p> <p>Quotes are appropriately chosen to support the point and neatly embedded in the text here.</p> <p>A link is made to wider reading, which is specific and illustrated with details from the text.</p> <p>Technical term are used correctly.</p> <p>This is a fair point but rather vague. More specific examples would improve this.</p> <p>The comments on form, rhyme and rhythm are rather general, but the connection with the purpose of the text – a song lyric – has been recognized.</p> <p>Another technical term used appropriately, though without the evidence of a quote.</p> <p>The student begins a more detailed commentary on Text A.</p> <p>Another well-chosen quotation,</p> <p>followed by some exploration and analysis which shows she is really beginning to think about the effects of specific details and link them to the meaning of the text.</p>
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<p>The third stanza also shows the power of love to overcome negative qualities, being 'Virtue's unconquerable Aid' and it is compared to heaven.</p> <p>While 'Song' contains many different images to describe love, Pugh's poem, 'It's Only Love' focuses on just one, which is used like an extended metaphor. This is the idea of love as a disease – a 'virus' – which is referenced all through the poem, by using medical language. She starts by describing it as if love is a kind of operation, a 'judgement bypass', which makes you think of a heart bypass, and heart also could symbolize love. Many of the words in the poem fit with this idea:</p> <p>'anaesthesia', 'side-effects'</p> <p>'It leaves your conscience supple as elastic'</p> <p>suggests how people will do anything for love.</p> <p>The usual conventional effects of love are described, but in a slightly different way. Love is blind is a common saying. She says 'Some blindness/ is normal', making it sound like a medical side effect. Also, 'Sufferers claim to see heaven/on earth; stars in dull eyes.' Many poets have written about love in similar language. John Donne in 'The Sunne Rising' makes the place where he is in bed with his mistress seem like heaven or even the whole universe. There are many clever ideas, like saying the virus 'resists all treatment given' and 'no flame-retardant/ will work' reminding the reader that love is often compared to a fire.</p> <p>Describing love as a virus has a negative effect. However, like in 'Song' the good side of love is brought out. The 'toxins are a tonic' uses an oxymoron and alliteration to humorously suggest that love is like a poison but it also makes you feel good. The good effects of love are similar to the ones in 'Song'. It 'leaves you selfless, brave and ardent' while in 'Song' it 'kindles the Cold' and makes 'Cowards bold'.</p> <p>The tone of 'It's Only Love' is quite colloquial, as if someone is speaking conversationally and it is also quite humorous. The poem is written in strict sonnet form, which links it with love poetry of the past, for example by Shakespeare, but the colloquial language is less typical of a sonnet as they are usually written in formal language.</p>	<p>More short quotes, well-used, as she continues to explore Text A</p> <p>Now she turns her attention to Text B, using a comparison between the two to make the transition.</p> <p>Again, she uses a technical term appropriately,</p> <p>and follows it through with details from the poem which are explained and explored.</p> <p>The quotations here are still well chosen, but not now so well integrated into her writing.</p> <p>A good interpretation of the meaning here, though she could improve it by also commenting on the choice of words and use of simile.</p> <p>Here Sarah continues to explore the language of Text B,</p> <p>and begins to make some connections with love poetry in general and with her wider reading. The connection she makes with Donne is fine, but she has missed an opportunity to make a link with Text A too.</p> <p>She shows that she recognizes the conventional imagery of love. She could make this more effective by using an example, or referring back to her earlier example from Shakespeare, if no others come to mind.</p> <p>Now she is making some good, specific connections between the two poems, but she could still do more of this.</p> <p>She recognizes the tone of Text B and its structure. She has missed an opportunity to compare this with Text A, though.</p> <p>Here she is showing her understanding of form in relation to context, and making a general link with wider reading. She could make more of the point that the use of sonnet</p>
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<p>The ending of the poem is particularly humorous. Having said that</p> <p>‘once you’ve got the thing, it’s chronic’</p> <p>the final rhyming couplet has an ironic tone. People in love ‘learn to live with the condition’ but what they are really afraid of is not the disease, but getting cured, i.e. falling out of love.</p> <p>‘what kills them is the terror of remission.’</p> <p>Overall, both poems describe love in similar ways, showing the mixed feelings and effects by using metaphors and oxymoron. ‘Song’ is mainly a list of different ideas, but ‘It’s Only Love’ focuses on one main metaphor. I think this, along with the humour and ironic tone and the clever use of a sonnet form, makes it a more effective poem.</p> <p><i>Sarah</i></p>	<p>form here is slightly incongruous and so adds to the humour and irony.</p> <p>This point is fine, but she could perhaps explain more fully how the humour works.</p> <p>The conclusion is a little brief. Sarah has made a very good job of exploring the two poems in the time available, and has drawn attention to some connections and differences, including some specific similarities in vocabulary, ideas, imagery and techniques. She has explored the language of each poem and in places has analysed details of vocabulary and imagery very effectively, showing how these contribute to the meaning and effect of the poems.</p> <p>However, she has tended to spend most of her time writing about each poem separately and has missed some opportunities to make close comparisons. She made some valid links with her wider reading, both general and specific; more of this would improve her answer, although there is a certain amount of luck involved in knowing poems with detailed links. She could also have made some use of the basic dates and background information to relate the texts to their respective contexts.</p>
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